



Voices & Visions

A publication of the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ

Volume 4, Number 1

Spring 2002

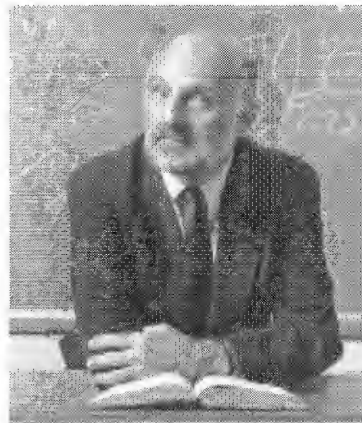
A Lamp Unto My Feet A Light Unto My Path

Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference Gathers June 14 -15

An outpouring of worship and celebration will mark the Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference on June 14 - 15. Gathering on the campus of Agnes Scott College in Decatur, in the greater Atlanta area, the meeting is open to all members of United Church of Christ churches. Members of congregations of the Southeast Conference will have a rare opportunity to experience the wonderful sense of renewal that has touched the life and spirit of our conference. You will find a complete schedule beginning on page five of this newsletter and we hope you will make every effort to participate fully in the Annual Meeting. This year's theme, *A Lamp Unto My Feet and a Light Unto My Path*, will seek to illumine our continuing journey to fully seek the light of the gospel and have this light illumine the growth and vitality of our congregations and our conference.



The highlights of our gathering will be inspiring and creative worship which will begin on Friday evening with Dr. Dwight Andrews, pastor of First Congregational Church UCC in Atlanta leading a jazz vespers and Walter Brueggemann preaching.



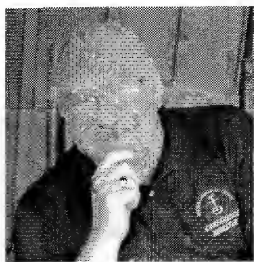
our youth ministries, our education ministries, new church development, our renewing congregations, a wonderful conference staff and much more. On Saturday morning Dr. Walter Brueggemann, Professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary will preach again. Our concluding worship on Saturday evening will celebrate our time together with the Rev. Wanda Washington preaching. Rev. Washington is a dynamic preacher currently serving as associate at Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, the largest congregation in the UCC.



Dr. Andrews is a professor of music at Emory University. An extended worship celebration on Saturday morning will recognize the many gifted lay and ordained leaders who have been instrumental in making our ministries in the Southeast Conference come alive. We will celebrate the work of TAP (*Theology Among the People*), *Rekindle the Gift*,

(Continued on page 3)

*"I will pour out my Spirit upon all ... and your young shall see visions
and your old shall dream dreams." --Acts 2:17*



“Grace to you, and peace ...”

A Letter from the Conference Minister

Dear Friends,

As we in the Conference office turn our attention to planning the Annual Meeting of the Conference on June 14 – 15, I would like to take a moment for reflection, or dare I say, of wonder. My ministry with you began six years ago, and at this Annual Meeting I will, as stipulated by the By-Laws of the Conference, be “eligible for re-election to a succeeding term of six (6) years.”

In these six years, the Southeast Conference has become one of the four conferences of the 39 in the United Church of Christ that is growing. Given our growth in membership, we have gained one General Synod delegate and will soon gain more. In addition to growth in our existing churches and new church starts, the Southeast Conference is beginning to expand into different partnerships that will mutually enhance both the Southeast Conference and our partners. Piedmont College, established by the American Missionary Association, which did not join the United Church of Christ at its formation in 1957, will vote this May to affiliate with the United Church of Christ. The TAP Program continues to expand and is reaching out to lay ministers from other denominations. We are in the process of joining The Resource Connection, an ecumenical resource center that will give our congregations access to an amazing range of videos and print resources, as well as workshops and training events.

Most significantly, we are growing in the spirit and in a deepening sense of our calling to live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a Gospel that has at its core a belief

in the redemptive activities of God in the lives of all believers and throughout all creation. We proclaim a Gospel that includes not excludes, that seeks to witness to God’s healing power through Christ in lives that are broken and in a society in its brokenness as well.

Throughout these six years we have been led by an extraordinary staff who have truly been partners in ministry. Each of them brings rare gifts, but above all a deep sense of calling to their ministry with us. As you can see in this newsletter, we continue to expand our staff to meet our growing needs. The heart of our Annual Meeting this year will be a celebration and worship recognizing all of the ministries of the Southeast Conference as well as the gifted pastors and lay leaders who equip them. I remember last year, after our wonderful Annual Meeting in Lanett, a person who had been absent from the life of the Conference for several years remarked, “This is a very different Conference than it used to be.”

We have built a firm foundation over these six years, a foundation that rests on Christ sent to us as a sign of the fullness of God’s love. I hope you join us for the celebration at our Annual Meeting. Together, we are living testimony that in the words of John Robinson, “There is more truth and light yet to break forth out of God’s Holy Word.”

Peace,
Timothy C. Downs

“MANY GIFTS, ONE SPIRIT, Southern Regional Youth Event *July 26-29, 2002, Epworth-by-the-Sea, St. Simons, GA*

Come celebrate the unity in diversity God loves with 250 high school students from several Conferences of the UCC. We’ll gather by the sea for awesome bible-studies, great music with singer Ken Medema, wonderful worship, activities, service opportunities and fabulous fun. Watch for flyers and registration packets SOON! Cost: \$200 per person, includes meals and rooms.

Conference Devotes Staff to Youth Ministries

We are pleased to welcome Betsy Flory to the Southeast Conference staff as the Director of Youth Ministries. Betsy graduated last year from Columbia Theological Seminary with an M.Div. degree and most recently served as Pastoral Associate at Pilgrimage UCC in Marietta. She is a member of Central Congregational UCC and previously completed a pastoral internship at Pilgrim Congregational UCC in Chattanooga. After a year of dramatic growth in youth activities in the life of the Southeast Conference in 2001, the Board of Directors of the Conference has agreed to call Betsy to help us continue to build this important part of our ministry. Betsy comes to this work with a passion for youth and their role within a community of faith. The gifts Betsy will bring to the staff will afford the conference a new level of attention to youth ministries, helping create conference-wide programs and seeking to empower the youth ministries of local congregations. Betsy is already involved in planning significant upcoming events:



- ◆ Youth activities at the Annual Meeting of the Conference in June
- ◆ The Regional youth gathering that will gather United Church of Christ youth from throughout the Southern Region, including Southern Conference, Southeast Conference, Florida Conference and South Central Conference on St. Simon's Island
- ◆ A youth trip to Cuba in 2003

These activities represent a desire of the Conference to be intentional in strengthening our youth ministry. In addition to planning conference events, Betsy is available to consult with individual churches on how to strengthen their youth programs, as well as leading retreats and workshops. You may call Betsy at the Conference office or email her at bflory@secucc.org.

Annual Meeting

(Continued from page 1)

While worship will guide our spirits, there will be other opportunities for business and to celebrate the growth and energy underway in our Conference. Following worship on Friday evening, the Ecclesiastical Council of the Georgia/South Carolina Association will meet to consider the petitions of two congregations to join the United Church of Christ. The annual business meeting of the Conference will be conducted on Saturday afternoon following lunch, after which there will be plenty of time to circulate through the display area and engage in other activities. This year, local congregations are invited to host a table in the display area where they can present some of the highlights of their own ministries and be present to discuss new and creative programs. Numerous displays featuring both national and Conference ministries will be displayed as well.

This year's conference promises the opportunity to catch the Spirit at work in our midst. Each congregation is encouraged to designate one of its delegates to help promote the Annual Meeting in their congregation. This is one you will not want to miss!

Voices & Visions

Editor: Mary Kendrick Moore
Layout Editor: Geraldine Ryons-Hudson
Contributing Editor: Timothy C. Downs

Voices & Visions is the quarterly newsletter
of the Southeast Conference
of the United Church of Christ.

Conference Office:
756 West Peachtree Street NW,
Atlanta, GA 30308-1138
404-607-1993 or 800-807-1993
<http://www.secucc.org>

Voices & Visions Office:
770-941-2048
email: mmmoore@secucc.org

Welcome to Mary Moore as Director of Communication for the Conference

For the last five years, Joyce Hollyday has served us as our Director of Communications. Under her leadership our newsletter has become excellent, our web site was developed, and other aspects of communications were attended to with great diligence. As Joyce enters a new phase in her ministry and devotes herself more completely to the work of *Rekindle the Gift*, we welcome Mary Kendrick Moore as our new Director of Communication and Editor of the newsletter.

Mary is no stranger to the Southeast Conference. She holds ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ, has served as the Interim Minister at Pilgrimage United Church of Christ in Marietta, and is currently planning a new church start in Smyrna, Georgia. Mary brings to this new task her gifts of editing and enthusiasm about how to creatively use communications tools, including our website and all printed materials, to tell the story of our ministries together. Don't despair! Joyce will continue to bless us with her regular column, *'Southeast Feast – Food for the Heart and Soul.'*



Farewell

As I approach my five-year anniversary with the Southeast Conference, I am grateful for the many ways I've been able to serve you: preaching, leading retreats and Bible studies, helping to plan Annual Meetings and staff parties. I feel particularly blessed by my time as editor of *Voices & Visions*, which enabled me to stay connected to events in the lives of individuals and congregations. So it is with some sadness that I leave this position. But I plan to continue writing for the newsletter, and I celebrate being able to focus full-time on the "Rekindle the Gift" program, which is a joy and an inspiration.

Joyce

Greetings!

The one similarity I can find in all the aspects of my various career choices is the use of words – attention to words, shaping how words fit together to communicate meaning, and creatively exploring how words will actually look when ink touches paper. And all toward the end of hoping someone will read or listen. From developing a brochure to designing a simple flyer to preparing my sermons, I find the magic of shaping words together creative and inspiring! I am excited about the opportunity I now have to wordsmith for the Southeast Conference.

Mary

CONFERENCE CALENDAR

MAY

- 4** **INSTALLATION OF TOM WARREN AS PASTOR** (Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill, TN)
- 5** **EAL/WGA POTLUCK & WORSHIP** (Allen Retreat Center, LaFayette, AL)
- 19** **INSTALLATION OF STEPHEN JONES AS PASTOR** (Midway Congregational Church, Midway, GA)
- 24** **ALA/TEN CHURCH & MINISTRY COMMITTEE MEETING** (Pilgrim Congregational Church, Chattanooga, TN)
- 25** **MEMORIAL DAY** (Conference Office Closed)

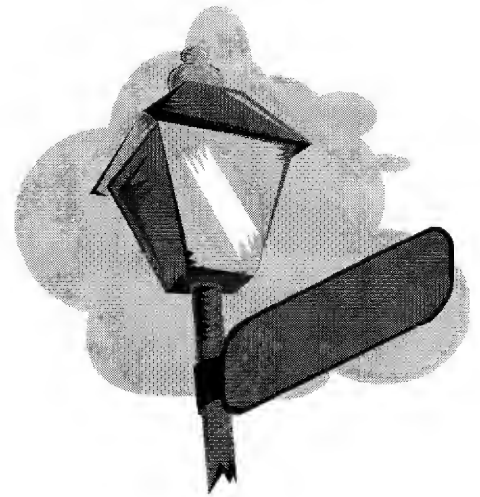
JUNE

- 12-13** **REVIVAL** (New Life UCC, Stone Mountain, GA)
- 14** **ALA/TEN CHURCH & MINISTRY COMMITTEE MEETING** (Agnes Scott College, Decatur, GA)

A Lamp Unto My Feet A Light Unto My Path

*Annual Meeting
of the Southeast Conference
June 14 –15, 2002
Agnes Scott College
Decatur, GA*

Schedule of Events



Thursday, June 13, 2002

6:00 PM to 9:00 PM	Dinner/TAP Meeting Dinner/New Church Start Pastors Meeting
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Friday, June 14, 2002

8:30 AM	Breakfast
9:00 AM to 12 NOON	Leadership Convocation - Walter Brueggemann
12 NOON to 1:00 PM	Lunch
1:00 PM to 3:00 PM	Leadership Convocation - Sally Purvis and Bennie Liggins
3:00 PM	Southeast Conference Board of Directors Meeting
6:00 PM	Dinner
6:45 PM	Hearings (on resolutions, budget, etc.)
7:30 PM	Worship – Jazz Vespers & Walter Brueggemann preaching
9:00 PM	Georgia/South Carolina Association Ecclesiastical Council Ice Cream Social/Conference-wide

Saturday, June 15, 2002

8:00 AM to 9:00 AM	Continental Style Breakfast
9:00 AM to 11:30 AM	<i>The Ministries of the Baptized Living Out the Word: A Celebration & Recognition of Ministries</i>
12:00 NOON to 1:00 PM	Lunch
1:30 PM to 3:00 PM	Annual Business Meeting
3:00 PM to 5:00 PM	<i>Kaleidoscope</i>
5:30 PM to 6:30 PM	Dinner
7:00 PM to 9:00 PM	Closing Worship

(All session times are Eastern Daylight times)

IMPORTANT ANNUAL MEETING NOTES

An Annual Meeting packet will be mailed to all local church pastors/moderators. It will include a letter of call, registration forms, lodging information, display table reservation forms, and consent forms for the youth program. Please contact your pastor or the Southeast Conference Office (1-800-807-1993; e-mail ghudson@secucc.org) for any additional information or forms that you may need.

Leadership Convocation to Meet Prior to Annual Meeting

A Leadership Convocation will be offered on Friday, June 14 from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. This year's event is open to all TAP participants, as well as new church start pastors, clergy and lay ministers, and will feature workshops which promote the renewal and strengthening of our skills for ministry. The morning workshop, led by Dr. Walter Brueggemann, is titled *Studying and Imagining*. Utilizing several biblical texts as models of study and imagination, Brueggemann shares, "We will consider the several steps that are involved in biblical interpretation that empower the church."

The Rev. Dr. Sally Purvis and Rev. Bennie Liggins will lead an additional afternoon workshop on *Power and Boundaries*, focusing on the development of healthy ministerial relationships. "We are pleased that the TAP convocation has expanded into the Leadership Convocation," states Kathy Clark, Director of the TAP Program. "This offers an exceptional educational opportunity for ministers throughout the conference."

In addition to the Leadership Convocation, TAP participants and new church pastors will also gather for dinner and their respective meetings on Thursday evening from 6:00 – 9:00 p.m. There is a registration fee of \$40 for the Leadership Convocation. All attendees must register on the enclosed annual meeting registration form.

Display Your Ministries

The Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference is a great time for congregations to share resources with each other. We invite local congregations and Conference programs to present a display featuring an exciting ministry in which you involved. Please bring with you materials to share and be prepared to staff your table during the exhibit hours. The cost for a display table is minimal: \$20 for a full table and \$10 for one-half table. Reserve your table now as space will be limited and tables will be rented on a first come, first serve basis. As an added incentive to encourage attendees to visit the exhibit areas, consider hosting a small door prize from your church or ministry that will be given away at the end of the exhibit session. For additional information or to reserve a table, contact Pat Kask at 678-775-1073 (day), 770-751-7029 (evening), pj05359@aol.com.

Kaleidoscope

Annual Meeting attendees will be offered a colorful kaleidoscope of opportunity on Saturday afternoon, June 14, from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. Choose from activities designed to support and enrich our ministries.

- Visit display tables of other congregations and share ideas and resources to build and strengthen ministry.
- Browse and catch up on your shopping at the wonderful selection of ministry resources from both Cokebury Bookstore and SERV.
- Enjoy a walk through beautiful downtown Decatur for sightseeing or shopping.
- Participate in an afternoon activity with the youth of the Conference.
- Simply sit back and relax and take time to renew old friendships and make new acquaintances.

Communications Idea Exchange

Communicating our programs and ministries effectively in print is always a running challenge for congregations. During the Saturday afternoon Kaleidoscope, Mary Moore, Director of Communications for the Conference will host a hands-on consultation on layout and graphic design for churches currently developing or changing printed materials, including newsletters, brochures, or promotional flyers. Bring your materials and questions with you to the conference.

Remember the Memorial Service

Over the years, one of the special moments of the Annual Meeting is a time when congregations come forward to read the names of their members who have died in the previous year. We encourage all of you to come prepared to participate in that memorial service, which will take place on **Saturday evening, June 23**, after dinner. Each congregation should have a designated representative to read the names of its saints who have passed on.

A Light to Our Path

We are delighted to continue our new tradition of youth programming at this year's annual meeting, with a several interesting activities planned.

Friday, June 14

3:00 p.m. Registration and *Ice-breaking*

4:00 – 6:00 PM Puppetry Workshop
Cliff Aerie from the Office of Proclamation and Identity will train 8 young people in the wearing and operation of the 12-foot tall puppets that were used in worship at last year's General Synod meeting. Young people who learn to operate the puppets will be invited to participate in worship both at annual meeting and the Southern Regional Youth Event in July. Young people from middle school and up who would like to learn this wonderful form of performance are invited to contact the Conference office at 404-607-1993 x5.

9:00 PM Youth Fellowship following Jazz Vespers

Saturday, June 15

1:30 – 5:00 PM Youth Program
Imagination with Cliff Aerie
Walking the Labyrinth at Columbia Theological Seminary
Perhaps our puppets will even visit Decatur!

Volunteers Needed for Annual Meeting

It takes the gifts and hospitality of many individuals to make the Annual Meeting a success. Consider volunteering a portion of your time to help create a pleasant and inviting experience for everyone! Volunteers, adult or youth, are needed to stuff bags, help with registration, provide directions, and take meal tickets. To help, contact Maria Carter at 770-491-3763 (evening) or MaielleCM@aol.com.



Remembering in Prayer

Our sympathy is extended to *Joyce Hollyday* following the death of her father, Robert Hollyday, on February 15th. Joyce is Associate Conference Minister and Director of the Rekindle the Gift program.

♦ Our sympathy is extended to *Gerri Ryons-Hudson*, Administrative Assistant for the Southeast Conference, following the death of her stepfather, William Harris, in Philadelphia after a long struggle with cancer. ♦ *Woody Clark*, long time Pastor of Liberty Christian Church, UCC in Brantley, AL, reports that his father Bruce Clark, had several life threatening medical episodes over the last year. ♦ *Pat Kurtz*, the wife of *Bob Kurtz*, Pastor of St. John's United Church of Cullman, AL, suffered a stroke and continues to recover.

With Thanksgiving

G. Bronson Netterville, the interim minister at First United Church, UCC, in Nashville, TN celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination on February 10. ♦ The late *Idella Jones Childs*, a pillar of First Congregational Church, UCC, in Marion, AL, and mother of the late Jean Childs Young was inducted this month into the Alabama Women's Hall of Fame. ♦ *Angela Wright*, pastor of the new church start, Beloved Community UCC in Birmingham, AL, was awarded the honor of *Outstanding Woman in the Community* by the University of Alabama, Birmingham. ♦ Congratulations to Mountain Grove Congregational Church, UCC in Hanceville, AL on the occasion of refurbishing their sanctuary, and installing new stained glass windows. ♦ Central Congregational UCC in Atlanta celebrated their ground breaking on January 27th for a major renovation to their facilities, following a successful major capital campaign. ♦ *Henry Hobson*, chaplain with Hospice of Cullman County, AL, received a national service award for excellence in chaplaincy from the Veterans' Administration. ♦ *Dorothea Lotze-Kola*, a member of Central Congregational Church, UCC, in Atlanta, and hospital chaplain, was granted Ecclesiastical Endorsement as a CPE Supervisor. ♦ *Millard Fuller*, Founder and President of Habitat for Humanity, and raised in the Congregational Christian Church, UCC, of Lanett, AL was just awarded the Neibuhr Medal by Elmhurst College. ♦ *Milton Hurst*, pastor of First Congregational Church, UCC, of Talladega, AL was taped in worship this month by a team from Cleveland to be included in the Celebration Series of video tapes which is a resource presenting and interpreting the United Church of Christ.

Transitions

Elizabeth Clement, currently working with Faith in the City in Atlanta, was called to be the Dean of Religious Life at Deerfield Academy, Deerfield, MA and will begin her new position in September. ♦ *Stephen Jones*, ordained on March 15th in Eastern Virginia Association of the Southern Conference, was called as pastor of Midway Congregational Church, UCC, in Midway GA, he will be installed on May 19th. ♦ *Tom Warren* was called as pastor of Pleasant Hill Community Church, UCC, Pleasant Hill, TN, he will be installed on May 4th. ♦ *Elaine Sipe* was called to serve as pastor of Bethany Congregational Church, UCC, in Thomasville, GA.

If you have news you want to share, please e-mail Tim Downs at tdowns@secucc.org. Please remember our *Celebration and Concerns* in your thoughts and prayers over the coming weeks.

Living artfully might require something as simple as pausing. A common symptom of modern life is that there is no time for thought, or even for letting impressions of a day sink in. Yet it is only when the world enters the heart that it can be made into soul.

*Thomas Moore
Care of the Soul*

Southeast Conference Partners Review New Curriculum By Ginnie Ferrell

Five representatives from the Southeast Conference attended the Partners in Education training workshop in Baltimore, MD in February, participating in several informative workshops on a creative new curriculum, *Seasons of the Spirit*. Additional workshops provided fresh ideas in areas such as mission education, a workshop rotation model for Sunday School, artistic ideas and others.

Seasons of the Spirit is a lectionary Bible based curriculum which connects Sunday School education to the worship and outreach aspects of the church. An interactive website provides insight and activities connecting the curriculum and current events. This ecumenical curriculum, which replaces the *Whole People of God*, is available for use beginning in the Fall, 2002. Orders made prior to May 1, 2002 will receive a considerable discount.

Attending the training workshop with me were Mary Kendrick Moore (Atlanta), Evelyn McCowan (Sweetwater, TN), Susan K. Dunn (Charleston), and Carroll Campion (Charleston). As your Partners in Education, all who attended will gladly work with any local church to share the information about *Seasons of the Spirit* and other resources published by the United Church of Christ. If you would like a Partner to visit your church, please contact Ginnie Ferrell at 770/493-7834. Or visit the website at www.spiritseasons.com for more details on all aspects of the Seasons of the Spirit curriculum.

Ginnie Ferrell is the Minister for Children and Youth at Central Congregational Church, UCC in Atlanta, GA. She can be contacted at ginnie@central-ucc.org.

Getting Started By Betsy Taylor Flory

I am delighted to be on the staff of the SE Conference and am excited about getting to know many of you over the coming months. As the mother of two teens and one nearly-teen adolescent, I am keenly interested in how we *translate* the gospel to people who live in a culture some of us adults find quite foreign. Additionally, I thoroughly enjoy the company of teenagers and look forward to the times I spend with them. My job will have two emphases:

- ◆ Supporting youth ministers in the work they are already doing in their churches by finding resources and providing forums for discussion, brainstorming and moral support.
- ◆ Creating and locating youth programs that extend the Christian formation of our local congregations.

I am currently updating the roster of youth workers in the Conference and encourage churches to send me any updated information about clergy or lay people who work with middle school and high school young people. In addition, I am working with Mary Moore, our Director of Communications, to create a youth ministry resource site on the Conference web-site. As we design this page of our web site, I hope to hear ideas from you who work directly with youth.

My position will include visiting conference congregations and getting to know your youth programs. I am working my way around to each church, but please feel free to contact me first if you have an idea, a request or a problem you would like to bounce around. I can be contacted at btflory@secucc.org or through Conference voicemail at 404-607-1993 x5.

Curriculum Workshops

FLORIDA

Hodges Boulevard Presbyterian
4140 Hodges Boulevard, Jacksonville, FL
904-223-6922
Date: April 20
Time: 9:30 am – 12:00 p.m.
Sbana@logosstaff.com
1-800-328-0200

GEORGIA

Savannah, GA
Date: To Be Announced
Watch the website for details!

SOUTH CAROLINA

McGregor Presbyterian
6505 St. Andrews Road, Columbia, SC
803-794-1225
Date: April 27
Time: 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Sbana@logosstaff.com
1-800-328-0200

Open to all interested UCC churches and members

Highlights of the Meeting of the Board of Directors January 12, 2002



✧The Board received reports from all of our representatives on the Boards of Directors of Covenanted Ministries and the Executive Council in the national setting:

Rev. Jennifer Crane Moss reported from the Executive Council where she represents us. ♦ *Dr. Rodney Franklin*, Chair of the Board of Directors of Wider Church Ministries, updated us on Disaster Relief Ministries, our work in Afghanistan and in the Middle East, and noted with thanks that the Southeast Conference has the largest contribution per capita to the *One Great Hour of Sharing* offering. ♦ *Rev. Lisa Tait*, representing the Southeast Conference on the Board of Directors of Local Church Ministries, noted that Local Church Ministries actively encourages new church development and the Southeast Conference is an example of the effectiveness of this focus. ♦ *Mr. Eric Maurer*, representing the Conference on the Board of Directors for Justice and Witness Ministries, said that while the United Church of Christ in the national setting was new to him, he was deeply impressed with the energy and commitment of the Board and staff. He noted that the *Neighbors in Need* offering is very important to the work of these ministries and encouraged our participation.

✧Tim Downs reported that we have been negotiating for the last year with Piedmont College for them to affiliate with the United Church of Christ and become members of the Council for Theological and Higher Education of the UCC. The Board affirmed with enthusiasm this conversation and eagerly looks forward to a growing relationship with Piedmont College.

✧Our conversations with Victory Church in Stone Mountain, Georgia and Virginia-Highland Baptist Church in Atlanta continue. Both congregations have voted to affiliate with the United Church of Christ. We are currently developing strategies for Conference congregations to become better acquainted.

✧The Southeast Conference Women's Retreat will be held at Camp Sumatanga, Gallant, Alabama on September 13-15, 2002.

✧Conference Staff presented the following reports

Rev. Bennie Liggins announced that he chairs a multiracial/multicultural task force in the national setting of the United Church of Christ and he is currently working with Tim Downs to organize a presentation at a national Evangelism event in Louisville in April. The pastors of the new church starts met in Birmingham in January for a training event. ♦ *Rev. Joyce Hollyday* reported that two-thirds of the *Rekindle the Gift* congregations have been visited. She represented the Southeast Conference at the Annual Meetings of the Connecticut and Rhode Island Conferences, both of whom donated to the *Rekindle the Gift* program. She presented a \$20,000 check from a grant from the Louisville Institute to support the work of *Rekindle the Gift*, and has completed the book proposal for the book telling the story of our American Missionary Association work in the South. ♦ *Kathy Clark* noted that the TAP (Theology Among the People) program continues to grow and the TAP Advisory Committee is in active conversations with Church and Ministry Committees to explore issues and common concerns. ♦ *Gerri Ryons-Hudson* reported that she will attend the UCC Office Support Staff Network Annual Meeting in April. ♦ *Tim Downs* reported that he has just returned from the most recent meeting of the dialogue between the Alliance of Baptists and the United Church of Christ. Stan Hastey, Executive Director of the Alliance of Baptists, thanked him for the extraordinary hospitality extended from the Southeast Conference to our colleagues in Alliance congregations.

Southeast Feast

Food for the Heart and Soul

By Joyce Hollyday



Rekindling Stories of Courage

With a flight already booked for an upcoming visit to New Orleans, in early January I logged on to the Internet, looking for a place to stay. I was shocked to discover that not a single hotel room was available anywhere in the city. When the Southeast Conference staff gathered a few days later, I explained my dilemma and said, "Something must be going on in New Orleans." Somebody asked, "Well, when are you going?" My reply, "January twenty-ninth to February third," brought a round of hearty laughs. The mystery became clear when someone else asked, "Joyce, did you ever hear of the Super Bowl?"

OK, so this is the price I pay for not being a football fan. I had to scramble a bit. I did finally find one room available—for \$285 a night! That hardly seemed like good stewardship. Tim Downs got me in touch with a UCC minister in New Orleans, who suggested a conference center run by Dominican nuns—a mere \$25 a night for a shared room. Comfortable and convenient, it was just three blocks from the focus of my visit, the Amistad Research Center on the campus of Tulane University.

The glitz and hoopla swirling around were hard to ignore—the Super Bowl had collided with both Mardi Gras and city elections. As I got off the plane, weaving with the other passengers through a throng of people in bright yellow shirts with signs saying "NFL Staff," medallions and beads were thrown around our necks as souvenirs of our stay. The Superdome was lit up at night, alternating between Mardi Gras purple, green, and gold, and patriotic red, white, and blue. The French Quarter was packed with humanity playing jazz, eating beignets, and enjoying street entertainers.

But I had not come for all that. My days were spent in quiet isolation at the Amistad Research Center, hunched over the microfilm machine, pouring through files of correspondence from northern missionaries who had come south after the war to teach newly emancipated citizens. I was surprised to discover that most of them had been women in their twenties, who felt

stifled by the expectations of New England culture for them and called by God to do something more with their lives.

Their courage was amazing. Their letters are filled with accounts of seasickness on the four-day ocean voyage south, of the isolation and ostracism that greeted them. They set up schools in old army barracks, hospitals, and cotton warehouses—even in Savannah's former slave market. Sometimes they built their own, or simply held classes out under the magnolia or live-oak trees. Many were harassed, denied housing and food from local citizens, and several suffered the burning down of their schools in the Klan violence that swept the South after Reconstruction. Supplies were often delayed coming from the American Missionary Association in New York, and one teacher asked for "a can of patience" to be sent along with the other necessities.

The students, young and old alike, walked for miles to attend the schools that might have more than a hundred pupils in a class, ranging in age from 5 to 95. They also suffered harassment, sometimes beatings, from local citizens who hoped to shut down this unprecedented educational effort. The students shivered in unheated schoolrooms in winter, and worked during planting and harvest times, while keeping up with their studies. Despite the devastating economic and physical deprivation they suffered after emancipation, they treated the teachers with profound generosity, and accounts of their many kindnesses fill the teachers' letters.

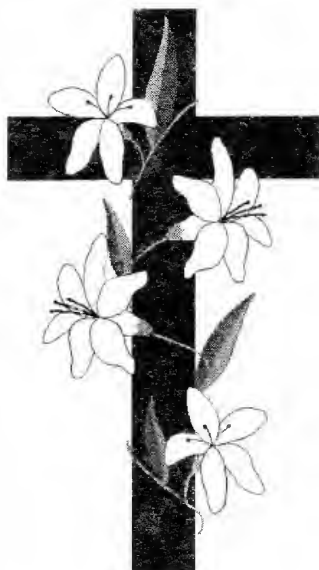
This effort of mutual sacrifice and courage began slowly to transform the South. Its fruits are still alive today in the Southeast Conference—in Talladega, Fisk, and Tougaloo colleges; in the many members of our congregations who attended Trinity, Lincoln, Dorchester, Avery, and the other primary and high schools established by the American Missionary Association. As I paged through those 130-year-old handwritten letters, now fading with age, I felt blessed to be part of this rich history and grateful for our efforts to celebrate it through the *Rekindle the Gift* program.

Room in the Heart

*Death abides not
on a hill called Golgotha
but in every heart
that makes room.*

*Life abides not
outside a garden tomb
in Jerusalem
but in every heart
that makes room.*

Ann Weems
Kneeling in Jerusalem



*I came that they
might have life
and might have it abundantly.*

John 10:10 (NASV)

Inside This Issue

Letter from the

Conference Minister	2
Conference Youth Ministries	3
Conference Calendar	4
Annual Meeting Information	5
Concerns & Celebrations	8
Southeast Feast	11



*Southeast Conference of the
United Church of Christ
756 West Peachtree Street, NW
Atlanta, GA 30308-1132*